

U. S. CONSULS SEE 4 HELD IN SOVIET

Pilot Who Crossed Turkish Border in Plane With 2 Generals Blames Error

OCT 28 1970

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN
Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Oct. 27—The pilot of the United States Army plane that violated Soviet airspace last week with two generals aboard was reported today to have told American consular officers that he landed in Soviet territory because of heavy winds and his own mistakes.

A United States Embassy said two consular officers met late last night with the three Americans and a Turkish colonel who was also a passenger on the plane, which landed in the Soviet Armenian border town of Leninakan.

The meeting took place in Leninakan, where the four men are being detained in a guest house pending the completion of a Soviet investigation.

Sharp Note Minimized

The military officers told the embassy aides that they were feeling fine, were in good health, and were being well-treated, the spokesman said.

United States diplomats said that the information conveyed by the consular officers did not alter the embassy's optimism that the four men would be released soon.

They minimized the importance of yesterday's sharply worded Soviet note protesting the border violation, and said the note largely seemed for propaganda purposes.

The detained officers are Maj. Gen. Edward C.D. Scherrer, head of the joint United States military aid mission in Turkey; Brig. Gen. Claude M. McQuarrie, Jr., his aide for ground forces, and Maj. James P. Russell, Jr., the pilot. The Turkish liaison officer is Col. Cevdat Deneli.

Turkish and American authorities have said the military officers were on a flight from Erzurum to Kars in east-

Continued on Page 17, Column 1

U. S. Pilot Who Landed in Soviet Blames Heavy Winds and Error

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2
ern Turkey on a routine inspection trip when the plane strayed about 50 miles farther east across the border.

The consular officers, Richard E. Combs, Jr. and Peter B. Swiers, told the embassy by telephone that Major Russell, the pilot, had told them in the presence of Soviet officials that he was making his landing approach to Kars when a gust of wind listed his light-Beechcraft plane up over a cloud bank.

Town Is Misidentified

When he found a break in the clouds, he looked and saw a town he thought was Kars from his maps, Major Russell reportedly said.

Major Russell, the spokesman said, have never flown to Kars before and had to rely on his maps for identification. The alignment of rail tracks and the position of the airfield convinced him, he told the consular officers, that he was over Kars and so he landed. It was only then he learned he was in Leninakan.

The spokesman said he had no further details on the landing and could not answer questions dealing with possible contact with control towers in Kars or Leninakan. He said he did not know whether there were control towers or whether there were simply landing strips.

The consular offices, after having received permission to visit the detained men, flew from Moscow to Erivan, the capital of Armenia, and were taken by car to Leninakan two hours away.

After the meeting, which lasted several hours, the two consular officers returned to Erivan, where they are awaiting permission to make another visit to Leninakan. This city is normally off limits to foreigners.

American officials have been expressing optimism about the chances for a prompt release of the men, and the apparently good conditions in which they were being held tended to bolster that feeling.

Early Release Expected

A senior diplomat said that it seemed logical to expect an early release.

"You simply can't make a U-2 case out of a Beechcraft," he said, alluding to previous intelligence flights by high-altitude U-2 planes.

He said the Russians could have let the four men go quietly, but the current strains in Soviet-American relations prob-

ably ruled that course out, he said.

The diplomat expected the Soviet authorities to let the men go but only after making it clear that Moscow was angered by the American military presence along Soviet borders.

Despite the Soviet protest, relations on specific issues have been cordial. The American space specialists here to discuss docking techniques have reported a warm reception, which included a look at the moon rock brought back last month by Luna 16.

And the Alvin Ailey dance ensemble ended a successful five-day stand in Moscow with an embassy reception at which leading Soviet dancers appeared.

Soviet Envoy Hints Deal

Special to The New York Times

ANKARA, Turkey, Oct. 27—The Soviet ambassador hinted today that the Turkish colonel aboard the United States plane might be returned in exchange for the two Lithuanians who hijacked a Soviet airliner to Turkey and killed the stewardess.

The ambassador, Vasily F. Grubyakov, said at a reception at the Iranian embassy, according to the semi-official Anatolian News Agency, that the delay in returning the colonel was probably due to "certain formalities."

"Right now in Turkey," he added, "there are two murderers and in Russia there is a Turkish colonel. Both from the point of view of friendly relations between the two countries and according to international custom, they must be returned."

The ambassador, the agency report said, denied that there was any question of negotiating an exchange. However, he remarked that the two issues had similar aspects.

State Department Hopeful

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27 (Reuters)—The State Department reiterated today that the incursion was clearly accidental. It said that the United States assumed the men would be released fairly soon.

The Soviet protest note complained about 10 alleged incidents involving United States planes entering Soviet airspace during the last three years.

United States officials said half of them involved small planes flown by Alaskan polar-bear hunters.

Only one occurred along the Turkish border, involving Lieut. Col. George Patterson, who was flying as a co-pilot in a West German civilian plane. The plane, belonging to a West German flying club, inadvertently crossed the border July 4, 1969, they said.